HOW THE GREAT GUEST CAME

A Fantasy in One Act

BY

LIONEL ADAMS

[Founded on Edwin Markham's Poem of the Same Title]

SAMUEL FRENCH
Founded 1830

25 West 45th Street
NEW YORK

LOS ANGELES TORONTO
LONDON

PRICE 50 CENTS

IN TIMES SQUARE

A melodrama in 3 acts. By Dodson L. Mitchell and Clyde North. Produced originally at the Longacre Theatre, New York. 10 males, 3 females. Modern costumes. 1 interior scene.

The story is concerned with David Benson, a theatrical producer, who, having acquired a wealthy financial "angel," is rehearsing a drama. This angel, Wilbur Craig, is in love with Gladys Earle, who is the star. Into their lives comes Miss Earle's former husband and leading man, Austin Jewett, once a Broadway idol, now a derelict. No one, says Benson, can play the hero except Jewett; and Jewett disheveled and slightly inebriated, is therefore engaged, much to the embarrassment of his former wife. Into a trapdoor on the stage of the theatre, a mysterious stranger is sent to his death by a pistol fired from the stage entrance. This brings about a most amazing situation, and when the haze is lifted the real truth is revealed.

(Royalty, twenty-five dollars.) PRICE 75 CENTS.

FIRST NIGHT

A mystery melodrama in 3 acts. By Frederick Rath. Produced originally by Richard Herndon at the Eltinge Theatre, New York. 24 males, 3 females, extras. 1 interior. Modern costumes.

In giving us "First Night," Frederick Rath, the author gave us two plays—one within another one. The inner one is enacted on the stage proper, supposed to be the stage of the auditorium of Sing Sing prison at Ossining. The plot concerns itself with the story of a wealthy patron of the arts who was particularly interested in helping poor and inexperienced devotees of the theatre, provided that they were beautiful. The old rogue is shot, and all the clues point to the brother of his latest protégé, who is arrested, tried, convicted and sentenced to death. His sister, as is the custom in all good melodramas of this nature, does some sleuthing and runs down some clues which seem to point to the real murderer. The sister works her evidence into the form of a play in which she plays the heroine and presents it before an audience which includes the Governor of the state. The play unravels the perplexing mystery in such convincing fashion that the Governor is happy to halt the execution of an innocent man. Your audience will enjoy a good thriller replete with tense moments and at the same time providing many a comic situation, thus giving a pleasant relief to the show.

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SAMUEL FRENCH
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HOW THE GREAT GUEST CAME

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HOW THE GREAT GUEST CAME

CHARACTERS

CONRAD, *the cobbler*
CARL, *a friend*
GUSTAV, *a friend*
WAYFARER
A POOR WOMAN
A MOTHER AND CHILD
A VOICE

HOW THE GREAT GUEST CAME

STORY OF THE PLAY

This play, based on the poem of the same name by Edwin Markham, deals with Conrad, an old shoemaker. He has had a dream that the Saviour would visit him and makes preparations for the expected visitor. Several friends call to discuss the fact that he must vacate his shop, which is also his home, because the site has been chosen to erect a church upon. Conrad tells of his dream of Christ's coming to his friends, who somewhat ridicule the idea. He is subsequently visited by several people whom he succors, and finally night has come on and he bemoans the fact of the Saviour's failure to arrive. At this moment a light enters the place and stops at the right of the table at the place set for the Saviour, and a voice is heard commending Conrad's goodness to the humble ones he helped. The voice tells Conrad that it was He who had visited him, when the poor came to his door and received aid from him.

How the Great Guest Came

SCENE: CONRAD'S *shop, in Ingelburg on the Danube River, December, 1825. The room is the workshop of a cobbler and shoemaker. Doors* R.1, L.1 *and* L.2. *Windows at back,* R. *and* L. *Outside, it is night, so that little is seen through the windows, save the shadowy forms of* CONRAD'S *callers as they pass them. Chair, head of table, is decorated with two sprigs of fir. Table draped with a fair linen cloth on which is spread a supper of wheaten bread and honey and milk. There are high-backed chairs and benches, perhaps the tiled benches of the period. Further front, on the other side of the room, is the cobbler's work-bench and seat. Beside this are some shoes, pieces of leather, etc.* CONRAD *has decorated the room with holly and fir and garlands, one of which rests beside his work-bench. Mantel back of work-bench. Doors* R. *and* L. *of mantel leading to living rooms. The light at end of play comes from* R. *door and rests on chair nearest door.*

AT RISE: CONRAD *is seated at his bench. He wears his Sabbath clothes, so he has spread a leather apron across his knees. On this a lapstone rests. With his cobbler's hammer he is pounding a piece of sole-leather in order to compress it for use. He stops and listens. There is a knocking at the door up* C. *He puts down his tools and places the garland on his work-bench. Then he hurries to the door expectantly.*

CONRAD. Come in, come in, my dear old friends. I haven't seen you for many a day.

[*Enter* CARL *and* GUSTAV. *They are prosperous peasants, wearing heavy coats because of the season, but knee breeches and woolen stockings.* CARL *is the younger of the two, smaller and milder.* GUSTAV *wears heavy, long mustaches and is more ponderous in movement and in voice.*]

CARL. [*Replying at once and lightly*] It's good to see you again, Conrad.

GUSTAV. [*Heavily*] Though we come on an errand that is not so happy.

CONRAD. With me it is a time for happiness.

CARL. Is it true that you must leave this place?

CONRAD. Yes, after living here for forty years, I must go.

GUSTAV. Does it not fill your heart with sorrow and resentment that, at your time of life, you must seek a new abode?

CONRAD. I must confess that I would not like it—if the purpose of my going was not such a lofty one.

CARL. Then it is true, as we have heard, that on this site the Cathedral will be built, and that the work is about to begin.

CONRAD. Yes. Think of it, my dear old friend, here at this place where I have worked so long, here where I spent years of happiness with my blessed Katharina —a cathedral will be built.

GUSTAV. How long is it now since she passed away?

CONRAD. Twenty years this coming May.

CARL. She was a good wife.

CONRAD. A better woman never lived— Sometimes I feel she has never left me—a thousand times I have felt her presence near me.

GUSTAV. Yes, Conrad, we know her gracious help and love made every hour a happy one for you.

CONRAD. And since she went away made memory a holy and a living thing.

GUSTAV. But Conrad, you must resent the order that compels you to leave this place.

CONRAD. No, Gustav—here where she lived with me, and blest me—and where I feel she always is—they are going to build this great Cathedral,—and here where my work-bench is, a sacred altar will be placed.

CARL. Conrad, my friend, you are blest with a disposition that makes you see the good in all things.

CONRAD. I remember that in a manger our dear Saviour saw the light of day—/Nay, He was the light./Now, where this humble home and work-bench is, a church and altar will be reared to worship God. My friends, do you not think that I am blest of men to be favored by this coming great event?

CARL. In fancy you may think it a monument in memory of your beloved Katharina.

GUSTAV. Or to commemorate your work as so faithfully performed.

CONRAD. I have not the pride to make that claim—but in my heart the humbleness that makes me see the blessing.

GUSTAV. Tell me, Conrad, why is it that out of season you have decorated your place?

CARL. Why have you your best apparel on?

CONRAD. I feel that I may speak to you as old friends.

GUSTAV. Speak to us as friends.

CARL. Friends since boyhood days—who have ever shared our joys and sorrows—

CONRAD. Listen. This morning early, as the cock crowed to scare the night away, an apparition came to me—

GUSTAV. You mean a dream—

CONRAD. Mayhap a dream—but I thought that our dear Saviour appeared and in a gentle voice told me that He was coming to visit me today—and would be my guest.

GUSTAV. Ach, He will not come.

CARL. You are not really serious, Conrad—you cannot believe this dream will be fulfilled.

CONRAD. I *know* that *He* will keep His word.

GUSTAV. And therefore have made these preparations—have strewn the floor with palm and fir—and hung the place with holly—

CARL. And on the table a feast of milk and honey and wheaten bread—

CONRAD. Yes—so that when He comes He will know that I have prepared for Him a welcome.

GUSTAV. But Conrad, should He not come—as He surely will not—your work will have been in vain.

CONRAD. Does not the expectation alone repay the little service I have rendered here?

CARL. Come, come, Conrad—you have thought too much of late about the building of the Cathedral, and that has placed this fancy in your head.

CONRAD. It has cost but little effort to prepare for His coming. Could I do less for Him—since He did long ago prepare a place for me and you and all of us.

GUSTAV. You'll have no Guest tonight.

[*There is a knocking at the door* C. *Tableau. For a moment it is evident that* CARL *and even* GUSTAV *are awestruck. They both expect and fear that the Christ will enter when* CONRAD *bids Him to.*]

CONRAD. Come in. Come in and welcome.

[*The door softly opens and in the doorway stands a* WAYFARER, *his garments dusty, his shoes worn and old.*]

WAYFARER. I came by your place. I saw your sign. I thought that you might help me.

CONRAD. What can I do for you?

WAYFARER. I am weary from much walking. What I need most is a pair of shoes to cover my bruised feet.

CONRAD. Then I can help you.

GUSTAV. [*Sarcastically*] Is this the guest for whom you laid your spread?

CONRAD. [*Gives shoes to* WAYFARER] These will do, I'm sure.

GUSTAV. You'll not give those—they are new.

CONRAD. He needs them badly.

CARL. New leather and a whole day's work.

GUSTAV. You can ill afford— You'll have nothing, at this rate.

CONRAD. Though I have faith, and have not charity— I am nothing.

WAYFARER. They will do.

CONRAD. They are yours.

WAYFARER. Thank you for your kindness. I cannot tell why I sought you out, but somehow I felt that you would help me.

CONRAD. You are welcome, and glad I am to be able to render you this service.

WAYFARER. I'll come again—when things are better with me, and repay you for the trust you have in me.

CONRAD. I am repaid already.

WAYFARER. I'll journey on.

CONRAD. Take this [*Gives bread and honey*] lest you hunger on the road.

WAYFARER. Thank you. May God bless you.

CONRAD. May He bless you too—my brother.

WAYFARER. Good night. [*To* GUSTAV *and* CARL] Good night. [*Exit, closing door after him.*]

GUSTAV. Oh, good night. So that is how you do. No wonder you are poor. Well, I'll on my way home. Will you come, Carl?

CARL. No, Gustav, I shall stay awhile with Conrad —perhaps I may learn something.

GUSTAV. Be careful lest thou learn to be a fool. [*Exit* GUSTAV, *closing door after him.*]

CARL. So that is how you do. No wonder you are poor.

CONRAD. I've never lacked. My dreams have all been filled.

CARL. This dream you had has made you feel too sure that all is well.

CONRAD. If you have doubts, then wait and see.

[*There is a knocking at the* C. *door.* CONRAD *and* CARL *look expectantly at the door.*]

CONRAD. Come in and welcome. [*The door opens and an* OLD WOMAN *appears, gray and bent and carrying a bundle of faggots on her back.*] Come in. What can I do for you?

OLD WOMAN. [*Taking her eyes from the table with*

difficulty] Please, sir, a string to bind my faggots. Already I have lost some on the road.

CONRAD. [*Lifting the faggots from her back*] A cruel burden for a woman of your years.

CARL. Come, Mother, sit you down and rest. [*Lifts faggots off* OLD WOMAN'S *back.*]

OLD WOMAN. [*Sitting*] I must be on my way.

CARL. You've far to go? [CONRAD *ties faggots.*]

OLD WOMAN. Not far from here.

CONRAD. But first a draft of milk—some bread?

OLD WOMAN. I thank you, but I could not eat and know my husband, ill at home, lacks food.

CONRAD. [*Stacking a plate with bread and honey*] Then take him some. I've plenty here—enough for both.

OLD WOMAN. Ah, a blessing on you.

CARL. You have little left to serve Him if He comes.

CONRAD. He will be content. With little food He fed the multitudes.

OLD WOMAN. Now my faggots and I'll go along.

CONRAD. It seems too heavy for you. I'd help you home but I expect a guest.

OLD WOMAN. I need the faggots for the fire to give my husband warmth.

CONRAD. [*Turning to the bundle of faggots*] Then be it so. This may be something He would have me do.

CARL. [*Waving* CONRAD *off*] I'll take her faggots. [*To* OLD WOMAN] Come, I'll see you safely home. [*He puts the bundle on his shoulder.*]

CONRAD. Good Carl! But I could go—

CARL. No, you await your guest. I think perhaps He'll come. Such faith as yours—

CONRAD. Well, then, I'll wait.

OLD WOMAN. God bless this roof and all it shelters here.

CARL. Amen. I now begin to see how peace and joy may come through service to another—in His name. [*Then tenderly*] Come, Mother.

[*He leads the* OLD WOMAN *off* C. CONRAD *looks after them, but a cold wind blows shrilly and he closes the door.* CONRAD *goes to window and looks out.*]

CONRAD. He does not come— [*Goes to workbench. A feeble knock at door. Again* CONRAD *goes to door to open it. Eagerly*] Come in. Come in.

[*A* MOTHER *and* CHILD *appear in doorway. The* MOTHER *is a peasant girl of eighteen, thinly clad for the cold season, but the baby is well wrapped in many folds.*]

GIRL. Conrad, can you give me shelter for the night?

CONRAD. Let me see— I ought to know you.

GIRL. I am Katharina—like your wife that's gone.

CONRAD. Ah, yes, Katharina—

GIRL. You knew my husband too.

CONRAD. Yes—well.

GIRL. But he is gone too. I was an orphan when—

CONRAD. Your husband, where is he?

GIRL. Last summer he attended cattle in the Alps—a landslide buried him—an avalanche.

CONRAD. Ah—an avalanche—that's bad, my poor girl.

GIRL. Three weeks ago the baby came. Today I was dismissed from the hospital—to seek a living for my baby and myself. I will gladly do that but it will take time to find a place. Tonight I am asking you to keep me here. I've nowhere else to go.

CONRAD. In Katharina's name I take you in. You'll have her room, sleep in her bed. Go put your child there now. [*Gives one of the two candles on mantel.*]

GIRL. Thank you—Conrad.

CONRAD. Take this light—then if you hunger, come and have some milk and bread.

[GIRL *takes candle and goes off into inner room* L.1 *with her baby. The shop is darker when she closes the door after her.* CONRAD *sees her go, then crosses room; goes to door* R.1; *takes down large key hanging by side of door; locks door. Hangs key up. Then goes to window slowly. Bell tolls seven times whilst he is at window. Then he goes to bench and kneels.*]

CONRAD. The night has come— This day is turning gray. Why, O Lord, do your feet delay? Why have You disappointed me? Have I done wrong, unworthy been— It cannot be that you forgot. It must be I have been at fault. But how? O Lord?

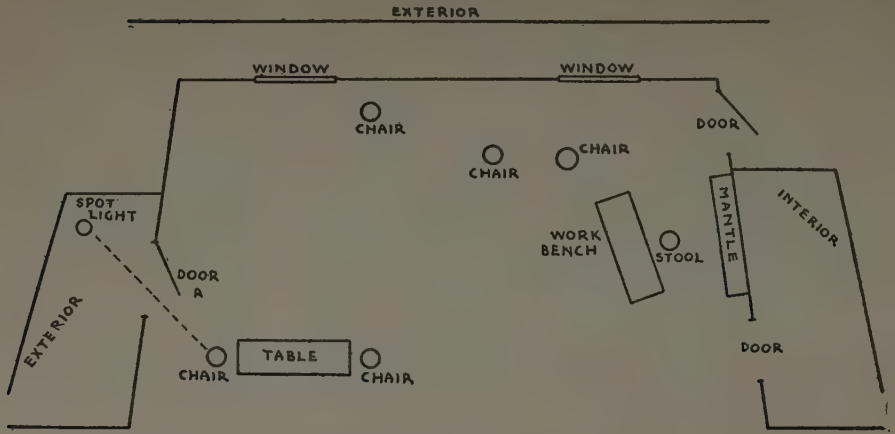
[*The door* R.1, *which previously was locked by* CONRAD, *mysteriously and slowly opens into the room. A light enters and rests at decorated chair—nearest door—the Lord's chair—*CONRAD *kneeling at bench, with head bowed.*]

VOICE. Conrad, Conrad, Conrad. Your loving voice I've heard. Lift up your heart, for I have kept my word. [CONRAD *lifts his head; looks toward the* LIGHT.] Three times I came to your friendly door. Three times my shadow was on your floor. I was the man with the bruised feet. I was the woman you gave to eat. I was the child from the friendless street. Blessed art thou, Conrad, for inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these, so also have you done it unto Me.

CONRAD. [*Is transfixed with adoration and repeats reverently*] "Inasmuch as you have done unto the least of these, so also have you done it unto me."

[*The* LIGHT *now leaves the chair; goes over to where* CONRAD *is kneeling.* LIGHT *envelopes him. During* CONRAD'S *last speech, music or chimes—or chorus—is heard softly in the distance.*]

SLOW CURTAIN



SCENE DESIGN

HOW THE GREAT GUEST CAME

MARY'S ANKLE

A comedy in 3 acts. By May Tully. Produced originally at the Bijou Theatre, New York. 6 males, 4 females. 1 interior, 1 exterior scene. Modern costumes.

This brisk and peppery farce is one of the cleanest and most hilariously amusing plays of recent years. It is the story of ambitious but impecunious youth. "Doc" Hampton, without a patient, "Stocksie," [illegible]kins, a financier without [illegible] broke and it is a real [illegible]ary Jane Smith is the [illegible]ier first as a solicitor of [illegible] an automobile accident. [illegible] be a tightwad but good [illegible]ry, immediately takes it [illegible]aving been informed by [illegible]y had just taken place. [illegible] the boys in a moment [illegible]e West to send on wed- [illegible]is wedding present, the [illegible]y him to Bermuda. The [illegible]mor, and saves the day.

[illegible]ENTS.

312

Adams

THOR

How the great guest came

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[illegible] Ford Manley. Pro- [illegible]Theatre, New York. [illegible]s. Modern costumes.

[illegible]ehind the microphone of [illegible]inging artist in Station [illegible]ance it comes about that [illegible] Duffy. Duffy, being a [illegible]from microphone fright [illegible]is own name. When he [illegible] divine hope in female [illegible]. But Denny receives all [illegible]nal love life and results [illegible] sort of undercurrent to [illegible] the buncombe of radio [illegible]ties for the introduction

[illegible]CENTS.

THE PASSING PRESENT

A play in 3 acts. By Gretchen Damrosch. Produced originally at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre, New York. 9 males, 8 females. 1 interior scene. Modern costumes.

While New York climbs boldly into the skies and tucks its inhabitants away into efficient bandboxes, the Frenches go on living in an old-fashioned private residence. Times are changing, apartment houses are going up around them, modern life has moved in with its new ways, but Mr. French, his wife Kathie and his sister Aunt Hallie, refuse to recognize this and continue to cling to their old way of living, with all its traditions. Although their income leaves them little margin, and although their children brood on the inequalities of life, they have friends and social position and they keep alive a flavorsome corner of old New York. Their son, Lansing, however, is their undoing. Hoping to earn a lot of money without working for it he gets mixed up in an oil swindle and is about to be sent to prison. His sister, Page, in an effort to save her brother and the family name, appeals to Brock Tobey, a wealthy broker, in order to get the money essential to his freedom. But Mr. French, in hearing of this, will have nothing to do with the idea, decides to sell their corner to apartment builders, and a general breakup of the family follows.

(Royalty, twenty-five dollars.) PRICE 75 CENTS.

THIS THING CALLED LOVE

Comedy in 3 acts. By Edwin Burke. Produced originally at the Elliott Theater, New York. 4 males, 6 females. 1 interior scene. Modern costumes.

Tice Collins believes that every man should marry and has come home with the idea of finding a helpmate. As the story opens he is to be the dinner guest of the Bertrands and it is the hope of Harry Bertrand to impress his guest with the perfection of marriage. Not that the Bertrands are an example, but Harry hopes to stage this show of devotion as a means to a certain end which has a business merger as the objective. The author's treatment of this revolutionary idea is so good-natured that he sweeps his audiences along in a whirlwind of laughter. Mr. Burke does not see marriage through the rose-colored glasses of romance nor through the clouds of marital bickerings. This disassociation makes possible a true picture of wedlock and he has deftly brought to life a normal group of characters engaged in the great American pastime of finding happiness and contentment. Such an adventure is replete with humor and no little sentiment.

(Royalty on application.) PRICE 75 CENTS.

THE BAT

A mystery play in 3 acts. By Mary Roberts Rinehart and Avery Hopwood. Produced originally at the Morosco Theatre, New York. 7 males, 3 females. 2 interior scenes. Modern costumes.

Miss Cornelia Van Gorder, a maiden lady of sixty, has leased as a restorative for frayed nerves, a Long Island country house. It had been the property of a New York financier who had disappeared coincidentally with the looting of his bank. His cashier, who is secretly engaged to marry Miss Van Gorder's niece, is suspected of the defalcation and is a fugitive. The new occupants believe the place to be haunted. Strange sounds and manifestations first strengthen this conviction but presently lead them to suspect that the happenings are mysteriously connected with the bank robbery. Any sensible woman would have moved to the nearest neighbors for the night and returned to the city next day. But Miss Van Gorder decided to remain and solve the mystery. She sends for detectives and then things begin to happen. At one time or another every member of the household is suspected of the theft. The audience is kept running up blind alleys, falling into hidden pitfalls, and darting around treacherous corners. A genuine thriller guaranteed to divert any audience.

(Royalty, twenty-five dollars.) PRICE 75 CENTS.

THE HAUNTED HOUSE

Comedy in 3 acts. By Owen Davis. Produced originally at the George M. Cohan Theatre, New York. 8 males, 3 females. 1 interior. Modern costumes.

A newly married couple arrive to spend their honeymoon in a summer cottage owned by the girl's father, who has begged them not to go there, because he claims the house is haunted. Almost immediately after their arrival, strange sounds are heard in the house. The bride leaves the room for a few moments and when she returns, her husband is talking very confidentially to a young woman, who he claims has had trouble with her automobile down the road, and he goes out to assist her. But when he comes back, his wife's suspicions force him to confess that the girl is an old sweetheart of his. The girl is subsequently reported murdered, and the bride believes her husband has committed the crime. A neighbor, who is an author of detective stories, attempts to solve the murder, meantime calling in a prominent New York detective who is vacationing in the town. As they proceed, everyone in the action becomes involved. But the whole thing terminates in a laugh, with the most uproarious and unexpected conclusion imaginable.

(Royalty, twenty-five dollars.) PRICE 75 CENTS.

GOOD NEWS

A musical comedy in 2 acts. By Laurence Schwab and B. G. DeSylva; lyrics by B. G. DeSylva and Lew Brown; music by Ray Henderson. Produced originally by Schwab and Mandel at the 46th Street Theatre, New York. 10 male and 5 female principals, singers, dancers and musicians. 4 exteriors, 3 interiors. Modern costumes.

The thrill that comes once in a lifetime is to score the winning touchdown for the varsity team when all seems lost and the enemy are rejoicing. This is exactly what happened to Tom Marlowe, football hero of Tait University, but the honor nearly escaped him when he flunked his Astronomy examination. The harsh old professor was mighty insistent that Tom qualify in this study, and things looked rather dark for the team, until Patricia, Tom's sweetheart at the time, induces her demure little cousin Connie to tutor him. For once in his life Tom places the habits of the stars on an equal footing with the gyrations of the pigskin and digs in in real earnestness. There are many pleasant surprises in store.

The New York production was supervised by the late Knute Rockne of Notre Dame, which will insure your audience real football atmosphere.

"Lively, humorous and skillfully staged, 'Good News' fills the evening with solid pleasure." J. Brooks Atkinson, New York Times

(Information regarding royalty and music will be furnished on request.) PRICE, THE PLAY, 75 CENTS.

THE VAGABOND KING

A musical play in 4 acts. Founded upon Justin Huntly McCarthy's romance, "If I Were King." Music by Rudolf Friml. Book and lyrics by W. H. Post and Brian Hooker. Produced originally by Russell Janney at the Casino Theatre, New York. 18 males, 11 females. 1 interior, 4 exteriors (may be produced with 3 exteriors). Period costumes.

The story is concerned with Louis XI and the roystering poet, who meet in a taproom of a wine cellar. The king makes Villon king for a day, in order to further a scheme of his own to take revenge on the haughty Katherine de Vaucelles. The exciting adventures of that day show the poet making love to Katherine, saving Paris from the enemy, and in the end just avoiding the noose.

(Regarding details of renting musical parts, etc., and royalty, special application must be made to Samuel French.) PRICE $1.00 for the text.